

## STATED MEETING, NOVEMBER 16, 1841.

VICE PRESIDENT MORTON in the Chair.

## DONATIONS TO CABINET.

*Strombus tricornis*, two specimens.—Presented by Mr. John Rulon.

*Ovula oviformis*. *Conus pennaceus*, *C. gubernator*, *C. terebra* : *Murex cornutus* : *Peterocera pseudo-scorpio* : *Cypræa felina*, *C. eburna* : and *Marginella andersoni*.—From Mr. Wm. S. Vaux.

*Nucula tenuisulcata*, *N. levis*, and *Terebratula septentrionalis*.—From Mr. S. S. Haldeman.

## DONATIONS TO LIBRARY.

Contributions of the Maclurian Lyceum to the Arts and Sciences. 8vo. Nos. 1, 2 & 3. Philad. 1829.—From Mr. Judah Dobson.

Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society, for July, August, September and October, 1841.—From the Society.

Notes on the Use of Anthracite in the Manufacture of Iron; with some remarks on its Evaporating power. By Walter R. Johnson, A. M. 8vo. Boston, 1841.—From the Author.

WRITTEN COMMUNICATIONS.—A letter was read from Dr. Dunglison, Secretary of the American Philosophical Society, acknowledging the reception of the last number of the Academy's Proceedings.

A letter was also read from Dr. Wm. Blanding, with an

extract from another to him from Capt. Land, presenting the Academy with the complete skeleton and skin of the Orang of Borneo, *Simia satyrus*? received November 2d.

Dr. George C. Leib communicated a description of the nest and eggs of the *Fulica Americana* and *Anas discors*.

He saw the *Fulica Americana*, in the month of June, 1841, breeding in the greatest abundance in the marshes bordering on Lake Erie, Erie county, Michigan. They were associated with the Florida gallinules (*Galinula galiata*), which were likewise employed in the labour of reproduction, and so close was the intimacy between them, that their nests were interspersed over the marsh in the most neighbourly contiguity, seldom being more than a few feet apart. The nest, rounded in form and rude in structure, is composed entirely of dried or withered rushes, without lining of any sort, slightly interlaced, except at bottom, where there is a simple crossing of the pieces to the depth of several inches.

It is five inches in depth, by a foot and a half to two feet in diameter. This large mass is placed on the surface of the water among the dense rushes, to which it is attached in several points of its circumference, thus rendering it less liable to be swept off by the winds and waves.

When disturbed these birds emit a note not unlike the cackle of the domestic hen, which is transmitted from one to the other for a considerable distance around, till the air becomes vocal with their music. This was heard by Dr. Leib not only during the day, but also at all hours of the night.

The number of the eggs varies from ten to fifteen, though the latter were observed to prevail. They are of an oval form, and measure two inches by one inch and a quarter, uniformly sprinkled with small dark brown spots on a greenish yellow ground. Both male and female assist in incubation.

Owing to their exceeding abundance, they are gathered by the neighbouring farmers for the table, and are considered by them superior in flavour and delicacy to the common hen's egg.

Dr. Leib found the nest of the blue-winged Teal (*Anas discors*,) together with that of the Mallard (*Anas boschas*,) in the month of June, in the meadows adjoining the marsh above referred to.

It is composed externally of dried grasses, neatly arranged in a circular form, and lined with a thick bed of down, taken from the breast of the female. It contained 18 eggs of a delicate cream colour, which measure 2 inches by  $1\frac{1}{2}$  inch. Though remarkably timid and wary at other times, such is its abstraction or devotion when upon the nest, that it would suffer me to approach near enough to strike it with a stick ; then in the greatest alarm, suddenly flutter and bustle off through the grass for some distance, like a wounded bird ; until, satisfied that the ruse had diverted attention from its treasure, it would mount into the air and quickly leave the object of its terror and solicitude behind.

Dr. Morton made some remarks on the so called *Pigmy race* of people who are asserted to have formerly inhabited a part of the Valley of the Mississippi.

It has long been contended by intelligent persons, who, however, were ignorant of anatomy, that the adjusted bones of individuals of this race, never exceed four feet and a half in height, and are often but three feet. These statements induced Dr. Morton to investigate the subject by means of a skeleton of one of these people, which he at length obtained through the kindness of Dr. Troost of Nashville ; Mr. A. M'Call, a correspondent of Dr. Troost, having exhumed these remains from a cemetery near the Cumberland Mountain, in White county, Tennessee.

“The coffins,” observes Mr. M'Call, in the letter read by Dr. Morton, “are from 18 to 24 inches in length, by 18 inches deep and 15 wide. They are made of six pieces of undressed sandstone or limestone, in which the bodies are placed with their shoulders and head elevated against the eastern end, and the knees raised towards the face, so as to put the corpse in a reclined or sitting posture. The right arm rested on an eathern pot, of about two pints in capacity, without legs, but with lateral projections for being lifted. With these pots, in some graves, are found basins and trays also of

pipe clay and comminuted shells mixed ; and no one of these repositories is without cooking utensils. In one of the graves was found a complete skull, and an os femoris, but most of the other bones were broken in hastily removing them. This is said to be the largest skeleton ever found at any of these burying grounds. It has the cranium very flat and broad, with very projecting front teeth, and appears to have pertained to an individual not over twelve or fourteen years of age."

After reading Mr. M'Call's letter, Dr. Morton exhibited the bones which accompanied it, and remarked that the stage of development of the teeth indicated a very juvenile subject. For example, many of the deciduous or first teeth yet remained in both jaws ; while the only teeth of the permanent set which had protruded, were the first molars and the incisors, which, as every anatomist knows, make their appearance at about seven years of age. Of the other permanent teeth, some had no part formed but the crown, and all were completely embraced within the maxillary bones. The presence of the new incisors, isolated from the cuspidati which had not appeared, obviously gave rise to Mr. M'Call's remark respecting the very "projecting front teeth," but which, however, are perfectly natural in position and proportion. The cranial bones are thin, and readily separable at the sutures ; nor does the *flat and broad* configuration of the cranium differ from what is common to the aboriginal American race. The long bones have their extremities separated by epiphyses ; and every fact observed in these remains is strictly characteristic of early childhood ; or about the seventh year of life. Even the recumbent or sitting posture in which they are found, has been observed in the dead bodies of the American nations from Cape Horn to Canada ; and the utensils found with them, are the same in form and composition with those exhumed from the graves of the common Indians.

Dr. Morton concluded by remarking that these remains were to him an additional and convincing proof of what he had never doubted—viz. that the so called Pigmies of the western country, were merely children, who, for reasons not readily explained, but which actuate some religious communities of our own time, were buried apart from the adult people of their tribe.